



News Release

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Death with Dignity update: Washington issues annual report

OLYMPIA — Washington's second annual report on the Death with Dignity Act shows that 87 people requested and received lethal doses of medication in 2010. The 2009 law allows terminally ill adults to request these prescriptions from physicians.

The report issued by the state Department of Health today covers January 1 to December 31, 2010. The 87 prescriptions were written by 68 different physicians and dispensed by 40 different pharmacists. It's hard to tell if participation in the act increased in 2010. Although fewer lethal doses of medication were dispensed in 2009 (65 in total), the law was in effect for less than 10 months in 2009 compared to a full 12 months in 2010.

Of the 87 people who received lethal doses of prescription medication in 2010, 72 are known to have died. Fifty-one died after ingesting the medication. Those who died were between the ages of 52 and 99. More than 90 percent lived west of the Cascades. Most had terminal cancer. According to prescribing physicians, all of the patients who received medication and died expressed concern about loss of autonomy as a reason for requesting a prescription.

Under Washington's Death with Dignity Act, the Department of Health collects information from patients and providers who choose to participate, monitors compliance with reporting requirements, and produces an annual statistical report.

The [2010 Death with Dignity report](http://www.doh.wa.gov/dwda/forms/DWDA2010.pdf) (www.doh.wa.gov/dwda/forms/DWDA2010.pdf) and [information about the law](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.245) (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.245>) are online.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website (<http://www.doh.wa.gov>) for a healthy dose of information.